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THE EXECUTIVES AND VOTERS OF GEORGETOWN, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

By WILLIAM TINDALL

(Read before the Society, May 18, 1920)

THE lack of a compilation containing a complete and authentic list of the names, and terms of office, of the principal executive officials of Georgetown, has been an embarrassing void in the history of the Seat of Government.

For many years I resorted in vain to every source of information on the subject available to me to acquire such data, but was only recently so fortunate, through the courtesy and enterprise of Mr. Carl T. Shoemaker, a life-long resident of that town, as to have access to records which enabled me to obtain a complete list of the chief executive officials of that town, and the dates of their appointment as such. To this I have appended a brief account of the several provisions of law prescribing the qualifications of Georgetown voters, as being germane to the subject, in showing how those executives were chosen, who were elected by popular vote.

This list comprises the name and date of appointment of each of the Commissioners who were appointed by the act of the General Assembly of the Province of Maryland, approved on June 8, 1751, who laid out the town and controlled its affairs in accordance with that law, and of their successors under that act; also of the Commissioners who were appointed by the act of the same Assembly, approved on December 26, 1783, to survey and plat the addition to the town known as "the Rock of Dumbarton," and the

name and term of office of each of the several Mayors and clerks of Georgetown.

From June 8, 1751, until December 25, 1789, Georgetown was governed by Commissioners who were either appointed directly by the act of the Province of Maryland, which created that office, or were elected by such Commissioners to fill vacancies due to deaths or resignations, among them.

From January 5, 1790, until August 11, 1856, Georgetown was governed by a Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Common Council; and subsequent to the latter date by a Mayor and the two boards mentioned. The office of Recorder whose duties had been in some respects co-ordinate with those of the Mayor and Councils, was omitted from the last named act which amended the charter and repealed all acts inconsistent with that amendment.

During the first forty years of the existence of Georgetown it was governed by nineteen different Commissioners; and during the succeeding eighty-one years by seventeen different Mayors, and by Councils.

The longest term of any Commissioner was the 32 consecutive years of the incumbency of Robert Peter. John Cox was Mayor for twenty-two years consecutively. Henry Addison was Mayor for eighteen years, but not continuously, as will hereinafter appear.

COMMISSIONERS OF GEORGETOWN.

The first officials of Georgetown were the seven Commissioners appointed to those positions by their respective names, by the second section of "An act for laying out and erecting a Town on Potomac River, above the mouth of Rock Creek, in Frederick County," which was passed by the General Assembly of the Province of Maryland, on June 8, 1751. These Commissioners were:

Captain Henry Wright Crabb,

Master John Needham,

Master John Clagett,

Master James Perrie, This name is spelled "Perrie" in the act of 1751 above cited, but is always written "Perry" in the minutes of the Commissioners.

Master Samuel Magruder, the Third,

Master Josias Beall, spelled "Josias Beall" in the act, but he is always recorded as *Josiah* Beall, in the official minutes of the Commissioners.

Master David Lynn.

A copy of the letter from the clerk of the Circuit Court for Frederick County, in the State of Maryland in regard to the manner in which the family name of Mr. Perry and the christian name of Mr. Josiah Beall, should be spelled; and a copy of a letter from Mr. Harry C. Hull, a prominent attorney of the City of Frederick, Maryland, relative to the spelling of the Christian name of Mr. Josiah Beall, which follow, appear conclusive that his Christian name was usually spelled "Josiah." Nevertheless, the first notice to Mr. Beall which was dated September 18, 1751, by the Commissioners, of whom he was one, was addressed to "Mr. Josias Beall, Coroner of Frederick County." I am also informed by the secretary of the Columbia Historical Society, who has relatives in Maryland, bearing the name of Perry, that formerly it was spelled both as Perrie and Perry at the fancy of the person bearing it.

"THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND,
ELI G. HAUGH, CLERK, FREDERICK, MD.

"January 27, 1920.

"MR. WILLIAM TINDALL,

"Washington, D. C.

"Dear Sir:

"Your letter of January 21st received; and in reply to the same, will state that we have looked over the Old Records in this office,

and they show the names you inquire about, spelled *Josiah Beall* and *James Perry*, taken from the indexes of our Old Land Records.

"Yours very truly,

"ELI G. HAUGH,
"Clerk."

"My dear Mr. Allmond:

"Yesterday afternoon had an opportunity to look into the Christian name of one named Beall, of whom you inquired.

"There are no records extant in our clerk's office—of which any person thereabouts knows—that give the original signature of this person BEALL; there are, however, numerous instances in the indexes of the name of Josiah Beall and likewise in the record of the Court from the year 1753 on, all of which names are spelled 'JOSIAH,' a Coroner, and that at the same time a Justice of the Peace, the duties of which are yet, in the counties of Maryland, covered by the same commission and performed by the same person.

A bronze tablet adorns one of the walls of our Courtroom erected on November 23, 1904, by the Frederick Chapter, D. A. R., which, no doubt, was given a most thorough and careful historic searching before this effort was made to perpetuate the names, which is as follows:

"In memory of
the twelve immortal Justices
of the Frederick County Court
who repudiated the Stamp Act,
November 23, 1765.

"Thomas Beatty	James Dickerson
Peter Brainbridge	William Blair
William Luckett	Samuel Beall
Charles Jones	'Josiah Beall'
David Lynn	Andrew Heugh
Thomas Price	Joseph Smith.

"This 'Josiah Beall' on this tablet was the same Josiah Beall whose name runs through the records from the early fifties on up to and passed this date of the repudiation.

"Regretting very much that I was unable to locate the original signature of this person which would be found only in the text books of those days which for some reason are not in or around the office to any person's knowledge, and at the same time hoping that this information may be of some little use, I remain,

"Yours very truly,

"HARRY C. HULL,
"Attorney-at-Law"

The Commissioners were empowered by the following Section of the Act of June 8, 1751, to fill vacancies in their Commission: Sec. 14 "And be it further enacted, That when and as often as any of the Commissioners aforesaid shall die, or remove from the county aforesaid, or refuse or neglect to join in the execution of this act, then, and in any such case, the major part of the other Commissioners aforesaid shall choose others in the place of such who shall die, refuse, remove, or neglect as aforesaid, and such person or persons so chosen, shall have equal power to act as the other Commissioners herein mentioned."

The following were chosen under that section as successors to the original Commissioners:

Andrew Heugh, who on March 24, 1754, succeeded John Needham, deceased;

Robert Peter, who on November 11, 1757, succeeded Josiah Beall, who resigned;

John Murdock, who on June 11, 1764, succeeded Henry Wright Crabb, deceased;

Thomas Richardson, who on February 24, 1772, succeeded John Clagett, who resigned;

Adam Steuart, who on February 24, 1772, succeeded James Perry, deceased;

William Deakins, Junior, who on February 24, 1772, succeeded Samuel Magruder the Third, who resigned;

Bernard O'Neill, who on May 22, 1782, succeeded David Lynn, deceased;

Thomas Beall, of George, who on May 22, 1782, succeeded Adam Steuart, who had renounced his American Citizenship, and went to Europe to reside, because he was not in sympathy with the revolution of the Colonies. Steuart's land was confiscated to the State of Maryland.

Benjamin "Canady" Stoddert, who was elected on July 29, 1785, as successor to Thomas Richardson, deceased;

Brooke Beall, who was elected on July 29, 1785, to succeed John Murdock, who resigned because he was incapacitated by illness. But Mr. Beall refused to accept the office;

Samuel Davidson, who was elected on September 20, 1785, to succeed Brooke Beall, who had declined the position; and

John Peter, who was elected on January 20, 1789, vice Andrew Heugh, deceased.

The foregoing were the only Commissioners appointed under the Act of June 8, 1751. Under their judicious administration the town was laid out; its government organized, and its early prosperity attained and assured. Their last meeting was held on January 20, 1789.

The office of Commissioner which they held was abolished by implication, but not in terms, by "An act to Incorporate Georgetown, in Montgomery County," which was passed by the General Assembly of the Province of Maryland on December 25, 1789, and created the offices of Mayor, Recorder, Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Councils.

SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS.

Five special Commissioners were appointed by Section 2 of "an Act for an Addition to Georgetown, in Montgomery County," which was passed by the General Assembly of the Province of Maryland, on December 26, 1783, for the purpose of causing to be surveyed and laid out into lots, certain land as a part of Georgetown, known by the name of the Rock of Dumbarton, and containing sixty-one acres, belonging to Thomas Beall, son of George, of Montgomery County, in that Province. These Commissioners were:

Messrs. John Murdock, Richard Thompson, William Deakins, Thomas Richardson, and Charles Beatty.

The name of Mr. Stoddert is associated with circum-

stances of considerable personal and general interest. While his name originally and as finally used by him was Benjamin Stoddert, without a middle name, his marriage license, which was issued on June 7, 1781, at Marlboro. Maryland, recites his name as Benjamin C. Stoddert. Previous to that time he had adopted the name "Canada," as a middle name, in a patriotic mood when the annexation of Canada to the American Colonies was proposed. Although he later discontinued the use of that name in that relation, he seems to have been commonly known by it for a number of years, according to the foregoing record of his membership of the Board of Commissioners which refers to him as Benjamin *Canady* Stoddert, and in the Minutes of which no change in the name appears, although the office he held was not discontinued until December 25, 1789. The quaint misspelling of his middle name in the minutes, was doubtless due to the limited geographical or orthographical knowledge of the clerk who recorded his election. The latest appearance of his name in the minutes of the Commissioners was March 6, 1767, but as the Commissioners held only one subsequent meeting after that date, and as no one was appointed in his place, he obviously retained the office until it was abolished in 1789. But only his family name is given in the minutes subsequent to those which record his election as a Commissioner.

When President John Adams, nominated him on May 18, 1798, as Secretary of the Navy, he did so by the name of Benjamin Stoddert only.

Mr. Stoddert was not only Secretary of the Navy, but for a few weeks in 1801 was the incumbent of that office, and also acting Secretary of War at the same time, when the latter office became vacant by the resignation of Secretary James McHenry.

When President Thomas Jefferson was inaugurated he

requested Mr. Stoddert to retain the office of Secretary of the Navy, until he could decide upon his successor. Mr. Stoddert accordingly continued as Secretary of the Navy until July 15, 1801, when he was succeeded in that office by Robert Smith. He was born in 1751, the year in which Georgetown was first established. He died in 1813.

He was a thoroughly industrious, capable and judicious administrator and citizen in every sphere of his activities.

The Clerks to the foregoing Commissioners were:

Alexander Beall, who was appointed Clerk on September 18, 1751. He was also appointed by the Commissioners at the same time, to act as Surveyor. He resigned to accept a commission as Captain of the Maryland Militia, to go on a Western Campaign as such. The Commissioners appointed Josiah Beall on November 11, 1757, to the vacancy thus made.

Robert Ferguson, was appointed Clerk on July 21, 1774, vice Josiah Beall, deceased.

Daniel Reintzel, was appointed Clerk on May 22, 1782, vice Robert Ferguson, who had expatriated himself from the United States out of sympathy with the cause of Great Britain, during the Revolutionary War.

These Commissioners held their meetings as such at private residences and taverns in Georgetown. Their last meeting was held January 20, 1789.

The first Commissioners seem to have had more than a fair share of trouble with the work of their first Clerk, and ex-officio Surveyor, Mr. Alexander Beall. They discovered that the plats prepared by him, and the certificates of ownership of the lots, did not agree. They paid their next Clerk and Surveyor, Josiah Beall, the sum of forty shillings as a recompense for "trouble he has had in putting the several incorrect memorandums formerly made by his predecessor Alexander Beall, in order for registering."

Upon discovering that the outlines of the lots differed from the original plats of the town made by their first surveyor, they employed a man on April 11, 1758, with the somewhat imposing name of John Frederick Augustus Prigg, to correct the errors so found. He was allowed five pounds sterling, if it should only take him seven days, and if longer, seven shillings, six pence a day for each additional day; and all his expenses except for travelling. Mr. Archibald Orme was employed to assist him with two chainmen, for eleven shillings a day, and "find himself and men in diet and lodging and to attend the Surveyor from sunrise to sundown each day." What a painful reminiscence for those who are the providers for the family larder today, and what a contrast between hours of labor then and now.

Prigg completed the job and certified that "I have Resurveyed and laid out the said town and have corrected and amended all the errors in the original Survey and have laid each respective lot off *as near as I could* in the form of the original plan within the bounds of the original survey that was shew'd to me." He submitted the plats and certificates so prepared by him, to the Commissioners at their meeting on Monday, September 25, 1758, and they were recorded in the minutes of the Commissioners of that date.

As this paper is rather a statistical account, than a biographical sketch, I cannot attempt to give a comprehensive narrative of the careers of the officials mentioned herein; but leave to some future delver into the records of their times, the pleasurable task of rescuing from oblivion the details of their public and private activities.

Robert Beall, Thomas Richardson, Robert Peter, Charles Beatty, Benjamin Canady Stoddert, Uriah Forrest, and John Murdock, were merchants. William Deakins, Junior, was a Justice of the Peace. William Beatty had distinguished himself in the army during the Revolutionary

War, and attained the rank of colonel. William Murdock was a Colonel of Militia raised for the defense of the Province in 1776; Uriah Forrest, lost a leg in the battle of Germantown, and Thomas Richardson, although a Quaker, was also a captain of a company and won a high repute in the Revolutionary Army.

MAYORS OF GEORGETOWN.

Robert Peter was the first mayor of Georgetown. He was appointed as such by the first section of the Act of the Province of Maryland, entitled "An Act to incorporate Georgetown, in Montgomery County," passed December 25, 1789, for the term of one year to commence on the fifth day of January, 1790. His successors under that Act were elected on the dates hereinafter mentioned:

Thomas Beall, of George,	on Monday,	January 3, 1791;
Uriah Forrest,	"	January 2, 1792;
John Threlkeld,	"	January 7, 1793;
Peter Casenave,	"	January 6, 1794;
Thomas Turner,	"	January 5, 1795;
Daniel Reintzel,	"	January 4, 1796;
Lloyd Beall,	"	January 2, 1797;
Lloyd Beall,	"	January 1, 1798;
Lloyd Beall,	"	January 7, 1799.

Lloyd Beall resigned as mayor on Saturday, October 19, 1799, in view of his doubt that being an officer of the State Military, and under marching orders, he might properly act as mayor. His resignation as follows was accepted on that date:

"Gentlemen of the Corporation of Georgetown.

"As a military character and under marching orders, and some doubts have arisen as to the legality of my holding the office of Mayor, I beg leave to resign into your hands that appointment, which you have done me the Honor to confer on me.

"I am Gentlemen:

"with great respect, yr. obt. servant,

"LLOYD BEALL. October 19th, 1799."

Under his administration there was a marked increase in municipal activity. The records were more completely kept, and the town conspicuously increased in prosperity and proportions in many ways.

Daniel Reintzel,	on Saturday, October 19, 1799;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 7, 1800;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 5, 1801;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 4, 1802;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 3, 1803;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 2, 1804;
Thomas Corcoran,	on Monday, January 7, 1805;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 6, 1806;
Daniel Reintzel,	on Monday, January 5, 1807;
Thomas Corcoran,	on Monday, January 4, 1808;
Thomas Corcoran,	on Monday, January 2, 1809;
Thomas Corcoran,	on Monday, January 1, 1810;
David Wiley,	on Monday, January 7, 1811;
Thomas Corcoran,	on Monday, January 6, 1812;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 4, 1813;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 3, 1814;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 2, 1815;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 1, 1816;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 6, 1817;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 5, 1818;
Henry Foxall,	on Monday, January 4, 1819;
Henry Foxall,	on Monday, January 3, 1820;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 1, 1821;
John Peter,	on Monday, January 7, 1822;
John Cox,	on Monday, January 6, 1823;
John Cox,	on Monday, January 5, 1824;
John Cox,	on Monday, January 3, 1825;
John Cox,	on Monday, January 2, 1826;

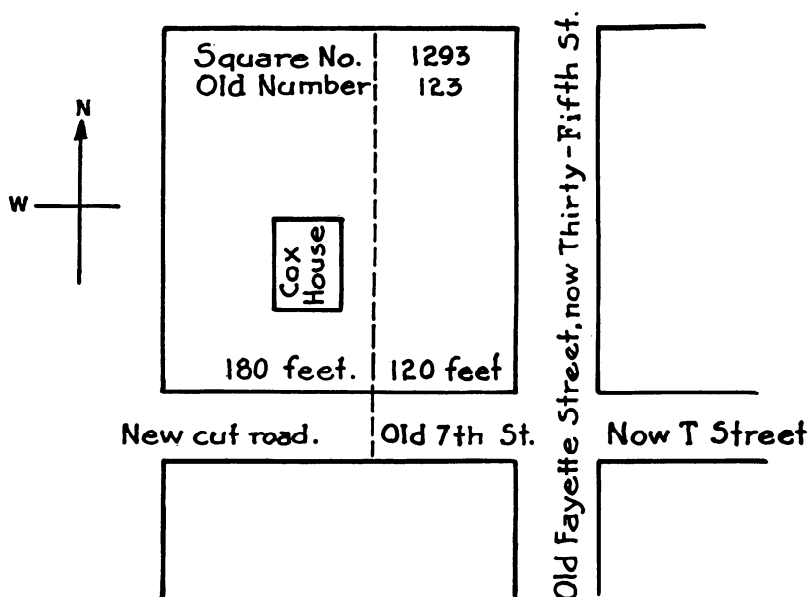
After his election as Mayor in 1826, Mayor Cox occupied a residence outside of the limits of Georgetown, and in order

to be eligible for re-election was obliged to secure the enactment of a law by Congress extending the limits of Georgetown so as to include his residence as follows:

An Act to extend the limits of Georgetown in the District of Columbia.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, That, in addition to the limits prescribed by an act supplementary to an act, entitled "An Act to amend the charter of Georgetown," approved third of March, eighteen hundred and nine, the said limits between Seventh and Eighth streets shall be further extended so as to extend westwardly, from Fayette Street, three hundred feet.

Approved, March 3, 1826.



This residence was a large white pebble-dashed house fronting south, located a short distance back from New Cut Road, and west of Fayette Street. The property was later owned

by Hon. George Earle, former Assistant Postmaster General. The site is now occupied by the Western High School.

John Cox, on Monday, January 1, 1827;

John Cox, on Monday, January 7, 1828;

John Cox, on Monday, January 5, 1829;

John Cox, on Monday, January 4, 1830.

By Section 4 of the Act of Congress, of May 31, 1830, (4 Stat., 427) the Mayor in office on that date, John Cox, was continued in office until the fourth Monday (the 28th) in February, 1831. He was re-elected in February and sworn in March 7, 1831. The Act of May 31, 1830 (Sec. 2) prescribed that on the fourth Monday of February, 1831, and on the same day biennially thereafter, the citizens of Georgetown, qualified to vote for members of the two boards, should vote by ballot for Mayor, to continue in office until his successor should be duly elected.

In pursuance of that law the voters of Georgetown elected the following Mayors, who held office thereunder as follows:

John Cox, from Monday, March 7, 1831, to Monday, March 3, 1845;

Henry Addison, from Monday, March 3, 1845, to Monday, March 2, 1857;

Richard R. Crawford, from Monday, March 2, 1857, to March 4, 1861;

Henry Addison, from Monday, March 4, 1861, to March 4, 1867;

Charles D. Welch, from Monday, March 4, 1867, to March 1, 1869;

Henry M. Sweeney, from Monday, March 1, 1869, to and including Wednesday, May 31, 1871.

The election on the fourth Monday, the 28th of February, 1859, resulted in a contention during which the lawfully elected Mayor was unlawfully deprived of his occupancy of the office for all of the two years of his term except 35 days.

Richard R. Crawford, James A. Magruder, and Henry Addison, were the opposing candidates for Mayor, at that election. The judges of the election reported that Crawford was elected; but the council upon counting the votes declared that Addison was elected, and he was accordingly sworn into the office on March 9, 1859, and discharged its duties until ousted on January 21, 1861, pursuant to a judgment of the Court, in "The United States, on the relations of R. R. Crawford, Plaintiff in error, *vs.* Henry Addison, No. 104, December Term, 1859." Crawford then brought suit on the bond, which was determined in his favor. By the judgment of ouster it was decided that Crawford, who was Mayor when the election was held, "was entitled to the office for the succeeding two years," either by virtue of the declaration of the judges who had returned him elected, or by virtue of that provision of the charter which enacted "That the Mayor shall hold over until his successor is elected."

Crawford accordingly was restored to the office of Mayor for the unexpired remainder of the term for which he had been elected, viz, 1859 to 1861, and recovered the amount of the salary of that office for the time he had been deprived of its actual occupancy as well as for the period during which he performed its duties.

The charter of Georgetown was revoked and the office of Mayor of Georgetown was abolished, by Section 40 of "An Act to provide a government for the District of Columbia," approved February 21, 1871. (16 Stat. at Large, P. 428.)

I have been able to learn the business employment of only a few of the Mayors of Georgetown.

Thomas Corcoran was a merchant. Henry Foxall a founder, who cast many of the cannons used by the American armies during the war of 1812. John Cox was a merchant. Henry Addison was a hardware merchant. Charles D.

Welch a miller; and Henry M. Sweeney, the last one, was a banker.

John Mountz was clerk from November 28, 1791, to January 10, 1857, when he was appointed consulting clerk of the Corporation of Georgetown at a salary of \$500 per annum, by a resolution of that date, in consideration of his service as clerk of the Corporation for the preceding sixty-five years, two months and two days. He died on August 1, 1857.

William Laird was clerk from Friday, January 9, 1857, to June 1, 1871, when the Corporation of Georgetown was abolished by Section 40 of an Act of Congress approved February 21, 1871. (16 Stat. 428.)

It thus appears that Georgetown was governed for forty years by Commissioners and eighty years by Mayors and Councils. There having been nineteen Commissioners and sixteen Mayors.

The Mayors and the Councils met at private houses, taverns and rented premises for many years, but for the last few years immediately preceding the revocation of Georgetown's Charter, they were housed in the United States Custom House.

The early fathers of Georgetown not only drove close bargains with their Surveyor, but their successors in its councils were inexorable in their enforcement of discipline among themselves. In 1791, councilmen John Threlkeld, William Deakins, Junior, Robert Peter, and Charles Magruder, were fined three shillings and sixpence, each, for non-attendance in due time, and others were victims of the same Spartan code. There are other deliberative bodies not far remote from this hall, that might "profit by their example," as Patrick Henry said of George Third.

Although the Commissioners who were appointed by the act of May 15, 1751, and their successors under that act,

were instructed as to the extent of their jurisdiction with respect to laying out the town, and in a few minor particulars, they were vested with practically unlimited control of matters of local administration, by the following provision in Section 12 of that law, and freely exercised it.

"And the Commissioners for the said town are hereby empowered to make such rules and orders for the holding of the said fairs, as may tend to prevent all disorders and inconveniences that may happen in the said town, and such as may tend to the improvement and regulating of the said town *in general*, so as such rules, except in fair time, affect none but livers in the said town, or such person or persons as shall have a lot of free-hold therein, any law, statute, usage, or custom, to the contrary notwithstanding; provided, always, that such rules and orders be not inconsistent with the laws of this province, nor the statutes or customs of Great Britain."

The first evidence of a distinct and permanent meeting place for the Town government, appeared in the "Resolution providing for the preservation of the Records of the Town," which was approved July 19, 1823, and appropriated \$150 for the yearly rent of a "safe and convenient house for the accommodation of this Corporation, and the preservation of the records and papers belonging to the Town."

That condition continued until the enactment of "An ordinance for the purchase of the building now occupied as Town House, approved March 22, 1845, which appropriated \$2,400 to be paid in six per cent stock of that Corporation, and provided that the purchase should date from April 1, 1843, "without further incumbrance than the charge of six dollars per annum, ground rent on nine feet thereof, covered by the alley on the east side of said premises. The property was accordingly transferred to the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Common Council of Georgetown, for \$2,500 by a deed recorded June 2, 1845.

Pursuant to a resolution of August 8, 1863, authorizing the Mayor to sell the Town House, it was conveyed on

September 30th, of that year to Elenor R. Lang, for \$7,500 and the sale confirmed by an ordinance dated October 14, 1863.

Mrs. Lang failed to meet the deferred payments under that conveyance, and on October 20, 1870, the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Common Council, repurchased the property as the highest bidders at a sale under the trust, for \$4,900, and received a deed thereof dated March 18, 1871.

When the charter of Georgetown was revoked on May 31, 1871, by the Act of Congress of February 21, 1871, the use of the property for Town Hall purposes ceased.

Its sale with a number of other properties, was again directed by an Act of Congress, of April 1, 1882, in order to obtain means for the purchase of a lot and erect a new engine house for Company No. 5; but while the other properties were sold, it was deemed best to reconstruct the Town Hall for the accommodation of the engine company, and it was accordingly remodelled for \$7,206.11, out of the proceeds of those sales and an appropriation of \$3,000 pursuant to Acts of Congress of March 3, 1883, and July 5, 1884, and so remains.

The Act of Congress of August 18, 1856, which made appropriations for certain civil expenses of the Government for the fiscal year 1857 (11 Stat. 93), appropriated not more than \$50,000 for the erection of a custom house at Georgetown, D. C., which was completed in August, 1858.

Upon the completion of this building it was found to be much more capacious than the needs of the custom service there required. The Corporation of Georgetown was therefore permitted to occupy the upper stories for municipal purpose, and the Mayor's office and the Councils and Aldermen were housed there.

METHODS OF ELECTING ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS IN
GEORGETOWN

Mayor Appointed and Elected by Officials.

The Mayors of Georgetown, under the act of the General Assembly of Maryland, entitled "an Act to incorporate Georgetown, in Montgomery County," approved, November 1789, except the first mayor, who was appointed to that office by section one of that act, were elected from among the aldermen, on the first Monday of each succeeding January, by the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Common Council, of the Town of Georgetown, assembled at some convenient place in said town, by a majority vote. The same officials were required to fill in the same manner, all vacancies occurring in the offices of Mayor, Recorder or Alderman, during the term of office for which the outgoing official was elected.

Aldermen Appointed During Good Behavior, Except to Vacancies.

Section 1 of the same Act appointed six inhabitants of said town by name, as "aldermen of the said town, so long as they shall well behave themselves therein." Section 3 of that Act prescribed that in case of a vacancy in the office of Alderman, it should be filled by the election of one of the Common Councilmen to the position of Alderman, by the officials who were empowered to elect the Mayor. A sort of civil service promotion.

POPULAR VOTING IN GEORGETOWN.

Common Councilmen Elected by Resident Property Owners.

Section 2 of that act was the first grant of popular suffrage in Georgetown, and prescribed that ten residents of the town above twenty-one years of age, who had resided there one

whole year before the first of January, 1790, and having visible property within the State above the value of one hundred pounds current money, were eligible for election *viva voce*, as *common council* of the said town, "for so long as they shall well behave themselves," by the votes of "all free men above twenty-one years of age, and having visible property within the State above the value of thirty pounds current money and having resided in the said town one whole year next before the first day of January, 1790."

Vacancies in Common Council Filled by Election.

Vacancies occurring in the membership of the Board of Common Council, by the election of councilman to the office of alderman, during the term of the official holding the office in which such vacancy should occur, were required by Section 3 of the Act of 1789, to be filled by vote of the residents of the town who were qualified to vote under Section 2 of that Act.

The mayor was annually elected after the passage of that act, by joint ballot of Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Common Council.

Section 5 of an Act of Congress approved March 3, 1805, (2 Stat., 333), prescribed that the Mayor of Georgetown should be elected for one year, on the first Monday of January, 1806, by joint ballot of the board of aldermen and the board of Common Council, and on the same day annually thereafter. The Mayor then in office was continued until the first Monday in January, 1806.

Mayor need not have been Alderman; But only "Fit and Proper Person."

This act removed the special requirement that the mayor should have been an Alderman, by prescribing that "Some fit or proper person" should be chosen.

Alderman and Councilmen Elected by Free White Male Resident Tax Payers.

The same act prescribed that the board of aldermen and board of Common Council, should be elected on the 4th Monday of February, 1806, and annually thereafter; and the Board of Aldermen on the same day every two years thereafter, by "The free white male citizens of Georgetown, of full age, and having resided within the town aforesaid twelve months previously, and having paid tax to the corporation."

The Recorder was made an ex officio member of the Board of Aldermen, by Section 5 of Act of March 3, 1809. (2 Stat., 538.)

Mayor Elected by the Qualified Voters

The next change in the voting system of Georgetown, was by sections 2 and 3 of "An Act to amend the charter of Georgetown," approved May 31, 1830 (4 Stat., 426), as follows:

Section 2. That on the fourth Monday of February next, and on the same day biennially thereafter, the citizens of Georgetown, qualified to vote for members of the two boards of the corporation of said town, shall, by ballot, elect some fit and proper person having the qualifications now required by law, to be mayor of the Corporation of Georgetown, to continue in office two years, and until a successor is duly elected, and the person having, at said election, which shall be conducted by judges of election appointed by the corporation, the greatest number of legal votes, shall be declared duly elected, and in the event of an equal number of votes being given to two or more candidates, the two boards in joint meeting, by ballot, shall elect the mayor from the persons having such equal number of votes.

Aldermen and Councilmen Fill Vacancies in Office of Mayor

The duty of filling vacancies was prescribed in the Act of May 31, 1830, as follows:

SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That in the event of the death or resignation of the mayor, or of his inability to discharge the duties of his office, the two boards of the corporation in joint meeting, by ballot shall elect some fit person to fill the office until the next regular election.

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That the present mayor of Georgetown shall continue to fill the office of Mayor until the fourth Monday of February next.

This act continued John Cox as mayor until February 28, 1831.

Voters, Qualifications Changed

The qualification of voters was changed by the Act of August 11, 1856 (11 Stat., 32), to vest the franchise in

"every free white male citizen of the United States, who shall have attained the age of twenty-one years, and shall have resided within the corporate limits of Georgetown, in the District aforesaid, one year immediately preceding the day of election, and shall have been returned on the books of the corporation during the year ending on the thirty-first day of December next preceding the day of election, as subject to a school tax for that year (except persons *non compos mentis*, vagrants, paupers, and persons who shall have been convicted of any infamous crime), and who shall have paid the school taxes due from him, shall be entitled to vote for mayor, members of the board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council, and for every officer authorized to be elected at any election under the Acts of said Corporation."

The statute of August 11, 1856, also provided that for certain offences, the offender should forfeit the right to vote and be punished by fine and imprisonment.

In 1865 the Citizens of Georgetown in common with the citizens of the city of Washington were much disturbed by the probability that the male negroes of voting age would be vested with the right of municipal suffrage there. In order to prevent this, the councils of Georgetown passed the following resolution, providing for ascertaining the wishes of the people of Georgetown in that respect.

"A RESOLUTION IN REGARD TO NEGRO SUFFRAGE.

"WHEREAS it is proposed in the Congress of the United States so to amend the charter of Georgetown as to extend the elective franchise to persons of color in said town; and whereas such legislation, in the opinion of this Corporation, is wholly uncalled for, and would be an act of grievous oppression, against which a helpless community have no defense, except by an appeal to the sense of justice of Congress; and whereas it may tend to avert this evil to have an expression of opinion from the voters of the town; Therefore

Resolved, That the polls be opened on the twenty-eighth day of December inst., and be kept open on said day between the hours of 9 o'clock A.M. and 6 P.M., at the several precincts of the town, under the direction of the Commissioners of Election, for a special balloting by the qualified voters of the town upon the question whether they are in favor of the extension of the right of suffrage by law to the colored inhabitants of said town or not—those in favor of said extension to vote "Yes", and those opposed thereto to vote "No", and the Commissioners of Election immediately after said vote, shall return the result thereof to this Corporation.

Resolver further, That the Mayor be, and he is hereby, requested to give due notice of said resolution by publication. Approved Dec. 22, 1865."

At the balloting held in accordance with the foregoing resolution, *seven hundred and twelve persons* voted against Negro suffrage, and *one* for it. This result was communicated to Congress pursuant to the following resolution:

"A RESOLUTION in relation to the vote in regard to negro suffrage. Resolved by the Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council of the Corporation of Georgetown, That the Mayor be, and he is hereby, requested to communicate to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate of the United States, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, at his earliest convenience, the result of the election held in this town on the 28th of December last, in regard to Negro Suffrage; and that in said communication he did give a comparative statement of the votes polled in this town at elections held therein during the past four years. Approved, January 12, 1866."

*Voters Need Not be White, but Must Reside Three Months
in the Ward*

Another change was made in the qualification of voters, in the District of Columbia, embracing Georgetown, by the Act of Congress passed on January 7, 1867, and January 8, 1867, by the Senate and House of Representatives, in the order named, over the vote of President Andrew Johnson (14 Stat., 375) as follows:

“That from and after the passage of this act, each and every male person, excepting paupers and persons under guardianship, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, who has not been convicted of any infamous crime or offense, and excepting persons who may have voluntarily given aid and comfort to the rebels in the late rebellion, and who shall have been born or naturalized in the United States, and who shall have resided in the said District for the period of one year, and three months in the ward or election precinct in which he shall offer to vote, next preceding any election therein, shall be entitled to the elective franchise, and shall be deemed an elector and entitled to vote at any election in said District, *without any distinction on account of color or race.*”

This statute was the answer of Congress to the Resolution of the Georgetown Council, of December 22, 1865, protesting against negro suffrage.

*Voters Need Only be Males of Good Repute Who Reside in
Voting Precinct Thirty Days*

The last change made in the qualifications necessary to vote in the District of Columbia, including Georgetown, was in Section 7, of the Act of February 21, 1871 (16 Stat. 421), namely:

“That all male citizens of the United States, above the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been actual residents of said District for three months prior to the passage of this Act, except such as are *non compos mentis* and persons convicted of infamous crimes, shall be entitled to vote at said election, in the election district or precinct in which he shall then reside, and shall have so resided for thirty days immediately preceding said election, and shall be eligible to any office within the said District, and for all

subsequent elections twelve months' prior residence shall be required to constitute a voter."

This law of February 21, 1871, was revoked on June 20, 1874, by an Act of Congress, approved on that date (18 Stat., 116), and no privilege of voting in the District of Columbia has been granted since that date.

The people of Georgetown occasionally had their diversion with the sacred subject of municipal suffrage.

On February 11, 1831, Philip Doddridge, who was then Chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia, of the House of Representatives, wrote to the Mayor of Georgetown that

"A disposition seems to be manifested by several, towards a recession of all this District to the States, except the City of Washington, etc., and asked the opinion of the Mayor "Whether such an attempt would be seconded by the wishes of the population of Georgetown?"

The foregoing quotations are all of Mr. Doddridge's request that appears in the minutes.

It was referred to a Select Committee of the Councils consisting of Messrs. Turner, Cox and Crittenden, who apparently considered themselves as its pall bearers, as nothing further on the subject appears upon the minutes of the Councils of Georgetown, until March 5, 1832, when those minutes abruptly end with the following statement unaccompanied by any explanation:

For retrocession	44
For delegate in Congress.....	None
For Local Legislature.....	None
For remaining as we are.....	221
Silent	25

I did not farther pursue my investigation of the record in that respect, as the majority for "remaining as we are" was.

sufficiently pronounced to give the retrocession heresy its quietus for that time.

The people of Georgetown, so far as my investigation extended did not again seek to amuse themselves with suffrage until 1838, when the minutes of March 23rd of that year burst forth with the bare announcement that the variable residents had voted to change their minds on the subject of retrocession as follows:

"Resolved, That the Resolution be recommitted to the Committee which reported it, with instructions to ascertain and report to this Board, whether or not, a majority of the legal voters and license payers of the town did cast their votes at the recent poll, in favor of Retrocession,"

Report

That they devoted as much time and attention to the subject referred to them, as circumstances would permit, and submit the following analysis, which is drawn from documents furnished by the Clerk of the Corporation, and may be confidently relied on as correct.

It appears by the statement received from the Clerk of the Corporation, that the whole number of legal voters in town,

is410

Whole number of legal voters who cast their votes
for and against Retrocession at the recent poll..258

Number of legal voters that did not vote.....152

Of the 258 legal votes polled, there were in favor of

Retrocession139

Against it119

Majority of legal votes polled in favor of Retro-
cession 20

The whole number of votes taken in the town and county at the recent poll for and against Retrocession was 421. Of these there were in favor of Retrocession 244, of which number 105 were Proxies, License Payers and Voters from the county, and of the Proxies 62 were women.

The number that voted against Retrocession was 117, of whom 58 were Proxies, License Payers and Voters from the county, and of the Proxies 22 were women.

Number of legal votes in town.....410
Legal Votes given in favor of Retrocession.....139

—————
Difference of whom 119 only voted against Retro-
cession271

It appears further from an examination of the tax list of the town and of the return of the late vote on Retrocession

That there were legal votes	For Retrocession	Against it.
	139	119
Resident Freeholders	55	26
Non-resident freeholders	18	13
Exclusively county	26	8
License Payers	6	6
Nondescript	0	5
	—————	—————
	244	177
	177	
	—————	

Aggregate majority for retrocession 67

As it respects the amount of property owned by those who voted in favor of Retrocession, though forming no part of the instructions given to the committee, yet as a statement appeared in the Potomac Advocate of the 12th instant, calculated to make an impression on the public mind, that a large majority of the property holders in the town favor Retrocession, it is deemed proper to submit the following subjoined statement.

The whole amount of assessed property within the limits of this Corporation is.....\$2,317,500

To which add the amount of church and other property, heretofore assessed, but which is this year exempted from taxation and is not included in the above..... 25,380

—————
\$2,342,880

According to the statement in the Advocate, which has not been examined but which is taken for granted to be correct, the friends of Retrocession who voted, hold property to

the amount of.....	\$969,680	
the opponents	414,858	\$1,384,538
	—————	—————

Leaving without representation..... \$958,342

On motion of W. Getty, it was ordered, that the report of the Committee, just read, be entered at large on the Journal, and printed with the proceedings of the Board.

This was not only a recognition of eighty years in advance of the times, that women were qualified to vote, but an admission that they could do it more judiciously than men, who in such a large proportion entrusted them with a function which they hesitated to use. This makes Georgetown the *avant courier* of the propaganda for the rights of women to express their opinions on public questions by means of the public ballot.

It is of current interest also that on March 5, 1838, Mr. Bouldin moved in the Town Council that it be

"Resolved, That a delegate ought to be immediately allowed to the District, elected by the people of the District and admitted to the floor of the House of Representatives."

which was unanimously adopted on the 16th of that month.

As the Act of Congress approved February 21, 1871, which created the Territorial Government of the District of Columbia, provided for the election of a delegate in the House of Representatives, to which General Norton P. Chipman was elected twice and which he filled for four successive years, it appears that Georgetown was forehanded in that subject as well as on woman suffrage.

A RESOLUTION for ascertaining the sense of the voters of this town on the subject of retrocession, etc. Approved February 18, 1832.

RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND BOARD OF COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF GEORGETOWN, That for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of the voters of this town on the question of retrocession to the State of Maryland—of a local legislature for the District of Columbia—of a Delegate in Congress from the District of Columbia, the Judges of Election at the ensuing annual election of members of the two Boards of the Corporation, to be held on the fourth Monday in this month, be requested to enquire of each voter at the time he places his vote in the ballot box, whether he be in favor of anyone of the above proposed measures; or whether he be in favor of the present form of Government for the District of Columbia; and that the said judges be requested to record the sense

of the voters so expressed, and to communicate the same to the Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council of this Corporation, at the first meeting of the Corporation to be held thereafter; and that the Mayor of the town give notice to the voters of this town, by publication made in the *Columbian Gazette*, of the objects and intention of this resolution.

A RESOLUTION directing an application to the Legislature of Maryland, on the subject of Retrocession. Approved 26th March, 1838.

RESOLVED, That in pursuance of instructions given to this Corporation by the citizens of Georgetown, assembled in town meeting on the 12th February last, John Carter, R. P. Dunlop, Thomas Turner, John Marbury, Clement Cox, Samuel McKenney, and Otho M. Linthicum, be, and they are hereby appointed a Committee on the part of this town, in conjunction with any Committee that may be appointed on the part of the County, to memorialize the Legislature of the State of Maryland, at its present Session, to receive into the said State, with the concurrence of Congress, all that part of Washington County in the District of Columbia, lying west of Rock Creek, upon the terms and conditions, expressed in the first Resolution of the Series of Resolutions, adopted by the Town Meeting held in this Town, February 12, 1838, and which Resolution is in the following words:

"Resolved, That without reference to the political advantages to accrue to that portion of the County of Washington which lies west of Rock Creek, including Georgetown, from a Retrocession thereof to Maryland, in the opinion of this meeting, the pecuniary interest, and general prosperity of the Citizens will be promoted by such an act of Retrocession, provided that it can be effected on such terms as shall secure from Congress the reimbursement, to the extent of the public debt of Georgetown, of the expenses incurred by said Town, in the prosecution of those two works of acknowledged national character, the improvement of the Harbor, and the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; and from the State of Maryland, the cession within said Territory, of the County and inferior Courts having Jurisdiction therein."

A RESOLUTION further instructing the Committee on the subject of Retrocession. Approved 7th April, 1838.

RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND BOARD OF COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF GEORGETOWN, That the Committee appointed to memorialize the Legislature of Maryland on the subject of Retrocession, be, and they are

hereby instructed to address a memorial to the Congress of the United States, praying the assent of Congress to the said measure, and that same Committee be, and they are hereby instructed to address a memorial to the Legislature of Virginia praying the assent of said Legislature to said measure.

A RESOLUTION on the subject of Retrocession. Approved March 23d, 1839.

RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND BOARD OF COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF GEORGETOWN, That the Committee heretofore appointed by the Corporation, on the subject of Retrocession, have, and they are hereby vested with the same powers with reference to the present Legislature of Maryland, which were conferred on them with reference to the last Legislature.

A RESOLUTION on the subject of Retrocession Approved 23d of January, 1841.

RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND BOARD OF COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF GEORGETOWN, That William Laird be, and he is hereby appointed, in the place of Thomas Turner, who has removed from town, a member of the Committee heretofore appointed by this Corporation on the subject of Retrocession, by resolution of March 26, 1838—and that said Committee be and they are hereby revived and clothed with the same powers, with reference to the present or any future Congress of the United States, or Legislature of Maryland, which were conferred to them by said original resolution with reference to the Congress or Legislature then in existence.